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University of Virginia

Virginia Polytechnic Institute
and State University

NREL

Solar Decathlon

MS 3217

1617 Cole Boulevard

Golden, Colorado 80401

1-800-368-1311

solar_decathlon@nrel.gov

www.solardecathlon.org



bp solar



Dear Editor / Producer / Writer:

In just a few weeks Americans will get a glimpse of the future, as a “Solar Village” arises on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Spread along two blocks just below the U.S. Capitol Building, the Village will include some of the most advanced solar-powered, energy-efficient homes ever conceived, each designed and built by inventive students from colleges and universities around the country.

The homes will be measured against a rigorous set of criteria in the first ever Solar Decathlon competition, an event sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, Home Depot, BP Solar, EDS and the American Institute of Architects.

The Solar Decathlon will give architecture, engineering and other students real-world experience in energy-efficient design and solar power technologies – important issues as we look ahead to our energy future.

Each house will take shape on its respective campus, then be transported to Washington, D.C. Beginning Sept. 19, the Solar Decathlon houses will be assembled at the contest site, where their designs will be judged and their performance monitored during a week of real-world demands. The Solar Decathlon consists of 10 distinct contests: design and livability, plans and presentation, graphics and communication, interior comfort, refrigeration, hot water, energy balance, lighting, operating a home business and transportation.

Accordingly, each house will be required to produce its own power by way of solar-electric panels, and teams must complete a series of tasks, ranging from cooking to doing laundry, in their self-sufficient structures. Each team will even have to perform errands in an electric car that can only be charged by the power produced from each home.

The Solar Decathlon appeals to readers and viewers across a wide range of interests. The event encompasses home design, new technology, environmental trends and lifestyles – not to mention an intriguing new avenue in inter-collegiate competition.

Experts will be available to explain the technology and provide perspective. To learn more about opportunities for coverage, please call me at 303-275-4050, or email me at gary_schmitz@nrel.gov.

Best regards,

Gary R. Schmitz
National Renewable Energy Laboratory
Golden, Colorado